Real Time Expert© Poll

Corporate Political Activism

Sponsored by the Institute for Strategic Leadership at Drexel University

DREXEL UNIVERSITY
LeBow
College of Business
Institute for Strategic Leadership

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What is Corporate Political Activism?

“A public position taken by an organization, or its executives, on a divisive political issue, election, legislation.”

Our Mission

To provide an objective voice and immediate feedback when companies become politically active.
Company Takes Stand

Company announcement will be chosen about 6 times per year based on newsworthiness and interest level of the panel.

Expert Panel Surveyed

Panelists grade the company's management of the stand and give brief open-ended reactions.

Results Sent to Media

Responses are aggregated and reported to the media within 4-6 hours.

Follow-up Interviews

Reporters follow up with individual panelists.
The panel

Expert panelists are from 39 universities in 8 countries. They represent both liberal and conservative political leanings, and specialize in diverse topics such as corporate reputation, social impact, communications, politics, and economics.
Overall, what grade do you give Apple for this political stand?

A

B

C

D

F

Unsure/Unable to Answer

Apple has informed US Republican leadership that it will not provide technology or funds for the 2016 GOP Convention, as it did in 2012.

According to Politico, Apple has decided not to support the convention this year because it has grown uncomfortable with presumptive nominee Donald Trump’s controversial rhetoric regarding immigrants and minorities—specifically Latinos and Muslims—as well as women. In March, Trump called for a boycott of Apple products after the company refused to provide a backdoor for FBI officers attempting to break into one of the San Bernardino shooter’s iPhones.

For more details follow this link.
Poll Items

1. Overall, what grade do you give [company] for this political stand?  
   (Scale: A, B, C, D, F)

2. Evaluate the political stand on each dimension:
   a) Leadership
      the political stand is proactive, setting a standard for peer companies to follow
   b) Consistency
      the political stand is consistent with the central and enduring values of the company
   c) Transparency
      the company is forthcoming in describing the motivations behind the political stand
   d) Materiality
      the political issue is substantively relevant when key stakeholders are deciding whether or how to interact with the company

   (Each dimension rated on 1-5 scale, Extremely Inaccurate-Extremely Accurate)

3. If you have additional comments, write them here. (Responses are anonymous unless you choose to sign your name)
B+

The panel gives Apple an overall grade of B+ for the way they are handling the political stand. This grade varies considerably by the political leaning of the panelist.
Topline Results

The panel views Apple’s stand as consistent with its past actions and enduring core values (consistency dimension). However, it is lagging somewhat in terms of how relevant the stand will be to key stakeholders (materiality dimension).

One anonymous panelist suggested that Apple may have acted opportunistically. Another expressed some concern over Apple’s motivations.

Performance on Key Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>4.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materiality</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Open-Ended Responses:

“One wonders if Trump gave Apple a gift by criticizing them on a less polarizing/sensitive issue (backdoors on software/hardware), thus allowing them to satisfy many external and internal stakeholders who would want Apple to shun the GOP for other reasons.”
- anonymous

“Other companies seem to have been more open about this. I’m surprised that Apple has not publicly explained their motivations, instead allowing it to come out through what appears to be a leak.”
- anonymous
Drexel LeBow’s Institute for Strategic Leadership advances an evidence-based perspective to leadership. The Institute believes that clear, verifiable support will help leaders diagnose preconceived ideas and assumptions that may not be accurate, and replace them with practices that have been proven to be effective. It generates evidence-based knowledge through research grants, curriculum development, and corporate outreach. Visit the Institute.

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